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ABSTRACT

The Bridge Youth Advocacy Program is designed to provide an alternative community based service for status offenders (10 to 18 years old) diverted from the juvenile justice system and to increase appropriate use of social services by the police, court, and magistrates. Governed by the Catholic Social Services of Luzerne County (Pennsylvania), the program has six components: family counseling, runaway youth program, youth development and coordination program, life skills education, big brother/big sister program, and youth advocacy program. Efforts to increase referrals include outreach, continuing liaison activities, and a formalized referral system. The program has been successful in substantially increasing the number of referrals to the Youth Advocacy Program and in increasing the number of referral sources. The goal of delivering services to the status offender and his family has also been met. (SBH)

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The Bridge
Youth Services Center

A Documentation of The Bridge Youth Advocacy Program.

December 28, 1979

Rose Yarmel, M.S.W.

Objective: This project was initiated and completed under the auspices of the Child Welfare Resource Information Exchange (C.W.R.I.E.). The objectives of C.W.R.I.E. are to identify and assist in documenting innovative and successful child welfare programs throughout the nation so that these may be replicated/transferred to other settings.

The Youth Advocacy Program was selected to participate in the C.W.R.I.E. documentation process, during November, 1979. Ms. Yarmel, a qualified outside person was hired to complete the documentation through the mutual consent of the C.W.R.I.E. and The Bridge.

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Program Introduction

In February of 1978, The Bridge a multi service community agency serving juveniles began the Youth Advocacy Program with funding from the Governor's Justice Commission, the United Way, and Luzerne County Children and Youth Services. The program's goals were two fold: to provide an alternative community-based service for status offenders diverted from the juvenile justice system and to increase appropriate use of social services by the police, court, and magistrates.

The Youth Advocacy Program offers a range of services to diverted status offenders. Intensive individual and family counseling is available to resolve problems manifested in disruptive behavior. Informal counseling and discussion stressing positive development of the youth's ideas and potential and youth advocacy to obtain needed resources to assist the juvenile and his family and other key services. The program also emphasizes positive and ongoing contact with local police forces, magistrates, and juvenile court personnel to encourage use of the program and to work with the police as part of a team helping the individual juvenile.

A program structured in this manner, focused upon the status offender and his/her family provides services not typically found within the juvenile justice system.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Section	Page(s)
Program Introduction ----------		1
Background Information	1	2
Characteristics of Service Area and Service Population	2	2
Program Philosophy	3	3
Program Goals	4	3
Other Community Resources used as Support Services	5	4
Program Management	6	4,5,6
Budget and Funding	7	6,7
Program Operations	8	7,8,9
Direct Services	9	9
Assessment and Planning Process	10	9,10
User Services	11	10,11,12
Program Evaluation	12	12,13

Appendix

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Catholic Social Services of Luzerne County is a multi-service community agency operating under the sponsorship of the Diocese of Scranton. Catholic Social Services has traditionally offered specialized family and individual counseling, services to senior citizens, and ongoing service programs for children. In 1973, with funding from the United Way of Wyoming Valley, Catholic Social Services developed a prevention oriented "school project" designed to provide comprehensive social services, primarily counseling, to youth in area school districts. In 1974 and subsequent years, the project, now known as "The Bridge", expanded with additional community funds and federal grants to offer a Big Brother/Big Sister service, Streetwork component, Runaway Youth program, and Life Skills Education service. The primary thrust of all components was to offer youth a non-traditional, non-threatening milieu in which to develop ideas and resolve concerns while receiving comprehensive services designed to resolve individual problems.

The impetus to develop the Youth Advocacy Program as a component of "The Bridge" came from several sources:

* the belief that juvenile court, detention, and committment as treatment to the problems of status offenders is inherently damaging and anti-therapeutic

* the recognition that status offenders would respond positively to a non threatening, non-labelling approach to their problems and needs

* the lack of an identifiable advocate for the status offender

* available data from a county wide youth services survey showing that while police routinely diverted juveniles from the court system (53% - 75%), they made referrals to social service agencies in only 4-7% of the cases, thus indication a lack of confidence and/or knowledge of appropriate social services. Referrals to "The Bridge" of status offenders prior to program implementation averaged three per month, primarily from urban police departments

* the passage of Pennsylvania Act 41, the major impetus for funding of this program, which removed status offenders from the delinquent category and encouraged development and implementation of community based treatment and rehabilitation services to status offenders as an alternative to secure detention and institutionalization.
(For more information on Pennsylvania Act 41, see Appendix A)

2. Characteristics of the service area and service population

The Youth Advocacy Program operates in Luzerne County in Northeast Pennsylvania. Seventy-eight percent of the population live in urban areas (as defined by the Census Bureau), with a large urban corridor extending from Pittston to Nanticoke, with Wilkes-Barre as the major city (population 58,000). A detachment of the urban corridor runs farther south in Hazle Township and West Hazleton, with Hazleton as the primary city. Despite the designation as an urban area, only seven municipalities in Luzerne County have a population of 11,000 or more. The Youth Advocacy Program's main office is in Wilkes-Barre, with a branch office in Hazleton.

Minorities comprise only one half of one percent of the population. The area is considered economically depressed, with a chronically higher percent of unemployment

than the national average and second highest percentage of poverty level families in the state.

The Youth Advocacy Program offers services to status offenders. Status offenders are youth from the age of 10 to 18 who have come to the attention of the police through acts which, if committed by an adult, would not be considered criminal. These acts include truancy, incorrigibility, curfew violations, underage drinking, and running away. Because of funding stream restrictions, referrals may only be accepted from an arm of the juvenile justice system i.e., the police, magistrates, or juvenile court.

The juvenile justice system in Luzerne County has always been progressive, as evidenced by the Youth Services Report showing a high percentage of youth diverted from the juvenile justice system, Because of this progressive attitude, few status offenders have reached the juvenile court for official intake hearings.

Status offenders are most visible to the police. There are seventy-five police jurisdictions in the service area. Only nine of the seventy-five have juvenile officers, and these are located in the departments of the largest municipalities. The departments in the service area vary in size, location (city, suburban area, rural area), previous contacts with social service agencies, and attitude toward dealing the problems of status offenders.

3. Program Philosophy

Focusing on the problem of referrals by police, courts, and magistrates, the Youth Advocacy Program sought to increase referrals by promoting effective communication between the police/court/magistrates and the Youth Advocacy Program. Positive communication can be accomplished by

* formalized referral procedures
* ongoing outreach and liaison activities
* prompt response to referrals
* feedback to the referral source

These measures will not change police attitudes toward social services immediately, but consistent attempts at effective communications will make gradual inroads.

Focusing on the development of a service program specifically for status offenders, the Youth Advocacy Program chose to utilize a multi-faceted client and family centered approach to the problems of status offenders. The basic assumption is that desruptive behavior by the juvenile is based in personal problems in relating to the system, his family, his environment, and his own changing needs. The helping process becomes one of identifying the conflicts that exist and assisting the juvenile and his/her family to resolve the conflicts in a positive manner that develops personal growth and relating skills.

The approach to helping must be flexible, positive, and supportive. Where conflicts exist with the system (schools, law enforcement officials, the courts), the worker is aggressive in helping the family to mobilize needed resources and to negotiate for the best solution possible. Once this level of conflict has been resolved, the worker seeks to deal with individual and family contacts in a manner that will strengthen the family's capabilities to deal with future problems. This is done by strengtening the family's ability to communicate and deal with intrafamilial conflicts, by developing their problem solving skills, and by clarification of individual and family values. The worker serves as a facilitator and supportive person in this process.

4. Program goals. The goals of the Youth Advocacy Program are:

* to increase the number and source of referrals from the

police, the court, and magistrates of diverted status offenders in need of professional social service intervention, with particular emphasis on increasing referrals from surburban/ rural areas.

* to provide immediate response and follow up to all referrals and feedback to referral sources
* to provide a specialized service package for status offenders and their families to assist in solving individual and family problems resulting in disruptive behavior
* to provide a specialized youth advocacy service to status offenders

5. Other community resources used as support services

The Youth Advocacy Program uses the services of varied agencies in the community to develop a supportive services plan for juvenile status offenders. Some of these agencies are:

* The Bridge, the parent organization of the Youth Advocacy Program, offers a Big Brothers/Big Sisters program, Runaway Youth program, Life Skills Education component, Streetwork component, and group counseling
* Children's Service Center, the Base Service Unit for children in the county, offers testing and evaluation
* YMCA tutoring program
* Youth Employment Service
* Job Corps
* Children and Youth Services
* Legal Services of Northeastern Pa.

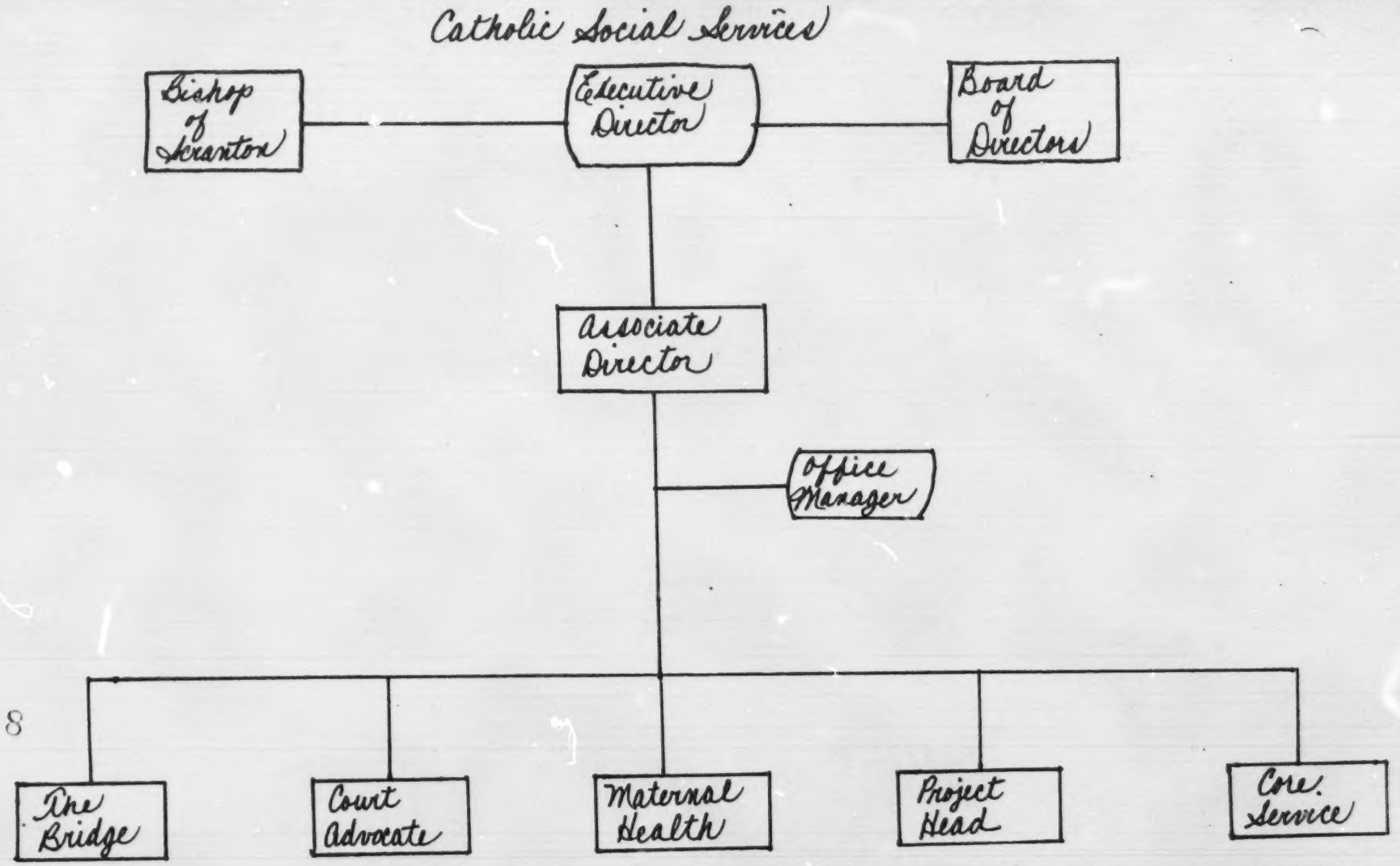
6. Program Management

A. Governance. The Catholic Social Services of Luzerne County of the Diocese of Scranton is the official welfare agency of the diocese offering a generalized family counseling program and services to youth and the elderly. Primary responsibility of all policies and procedures rests with the Bishop of the Diocese, designated as the President of the Catholic Social Services. A Diocesan Director of Catholic Social Services appointed by the Bishop is responsible for the general administrative supervision of all the various welfare agencies and hospitals of the diocese. Three branch offices (the Luzerne County Catholic Social Services/ is one) are located throughout the diocese, and administrative responsibility in each office is vested in a Priest-Executive Director appointed by the Bishop.

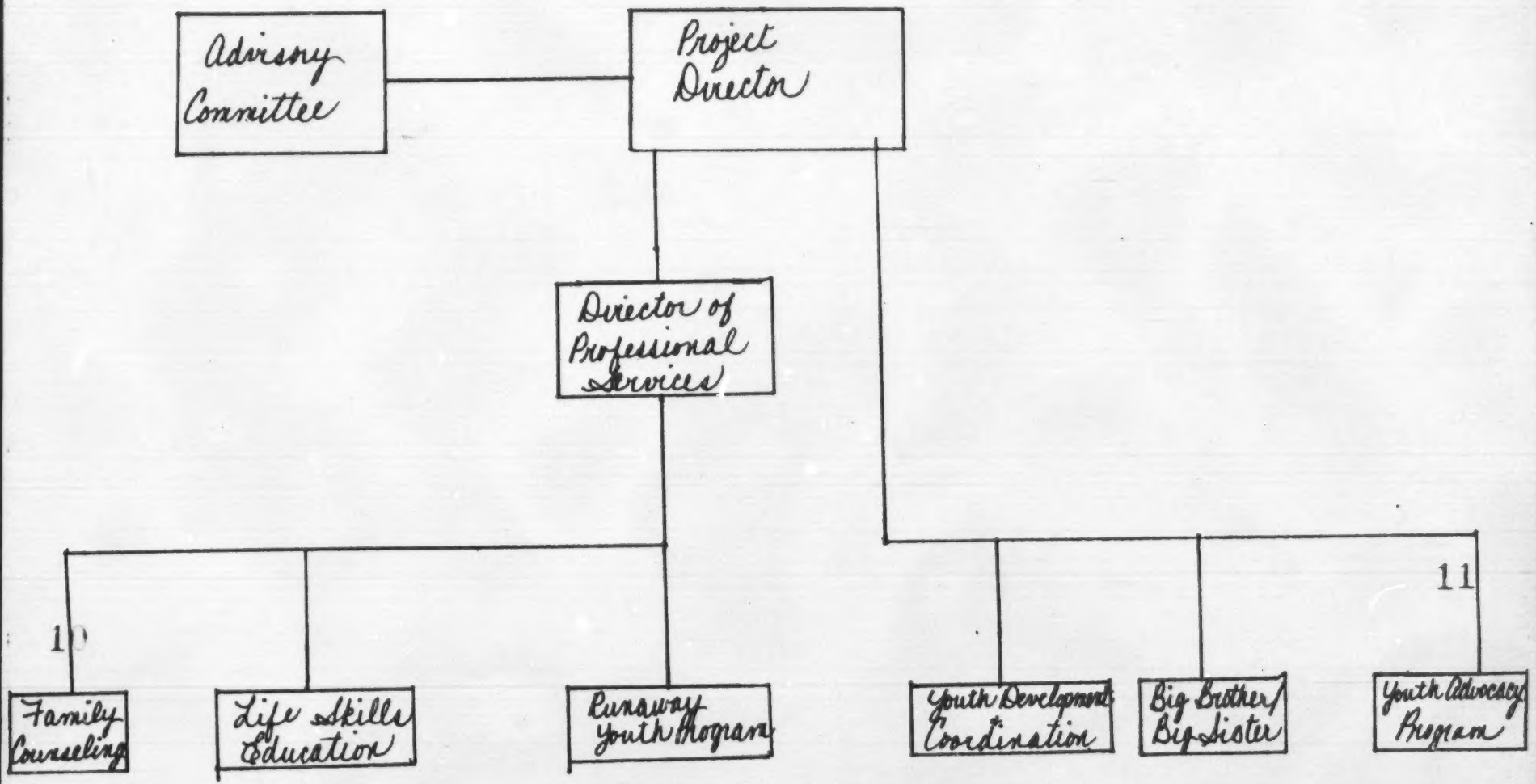
The Catholic Social Services of Luzerne County has an advisory Board of Directors composed of twenty-four persons appointed by the Bishop. This Board meets four to six times a year and recommends approval of personnel policies, salary ranges, grant applications, and reviews program direction and expansion. The Executive Director of Catholic Social Services is the treasurer of the Board of Directors.

B. Organizational structure. Figure 1 is a chart of the overall organizational structure of Catholic Social Services. There are five major divisions of CSS-- the Core Services (counseling); Project HEAD, a service to senior citizens; Maternal Health service; Courth Advocate Program; and The Bridge. Each division is headed by a project director.

Figure 1-A is an organizational chart of The Bridge. The six major components, each


Catholic Social Services
Bishop of Scranton
Executive Director
Board of Directors
Associate Director
Office Manager
The Bridge
Court Advocate
Maternal Health
Project Head
Core Service

The Bridge


Advisory Committee
Project Director
Director of Professional Services
Family Counseling
Life Skills Education
Runaway Youth Program
Youth Development Coordination
Big Brother/ Big Sister
Youth Advocacy Program

headed by a coordinator are:

* Family Counseling -- this program serves high risk, predelinquent youth referred from schools, community agencies, parents, and the youth themselves. Utilizing individual, group, and family counseling and community resources, staff seek to resolve problems and redirect the youth's activities to more positive goals.

* Runaway Youth Program -- this program is designed to offer special services to runaways. The primary goal is to offer a crisis oriented, family counseling program, with emphasis on family reunification and intensive follow-up family counseling. Short term, emergency shelter (one to seven days) and transportation home are also provided. With the execution of a contract with Help Line, the community crisis line, twenty-four crisis intervention is also available.

* Youth Development and Coordination Program -- this program, also called the "Streetwork" component is an effort to maintain a preventative program employing community organization skills in working with adult and youth groups in neighborhoods and communities. The street worker develops relationships with youth in their own territory -- on the corner, at playgrounds, anywhere they congregate. The worker attempts to discover the problems of the youth, to influence development of positive attitudes and behavior, and to redirect the youth into constructive activities within the community. At the same time, the streetworker solicits the cooperation of community groups, clergy, police, and parents in these efforts.

* Life Skills Education -- this program service to improve the ability of high risk youth/families to perform activites of daily independent living. The program has two priority services: Life Skills/Preparation for Independent Living groups for older adolescents and primary treatment oriented groups to single parent families on the waiting list of the Big Brothers/Sisters component. Treatment groups to increase parenting skills through Communications Workshops, S.T.E.P. and other processes are also available from this component

* Big Brothers/Big Sister Program -- this service offers the juvenile the opportunity to further growth and development through a relationship with an adult figure. This relationship is needed in the absence, either physically or psychologically, of the mother/father. Youth in this program may be in difficulty with the law, emotionally deprived, isolated in an institution or in need of a meaningful relationship.

* Youth Advocacy Program

There is an Advisory Council to The Bridge composed of social service professionals, youth, and community representatives. The staff of the Youth Advocacy Program work out of two locations: Wilkes-Barre (colocated with other CSS and The Bridge services) and Hazleton. The Wilkes-Barre office is the main office. Staff at this office include the Project Director of The Bridge, the Coordinator of the Youth Advocacy Program, two Youth Advocates, and a secretary. No staff are permanently stationed at the Hazleton office. An answering service handles all calls received by this office. Workers respond to the calls, and make appointments to see clients at the Hazleton location.

The Project Director of The Bridge maintains overall administrative responsibility for the entire Bridge Program. These responsibilities include the Youth Advocacy Program, personnel and office management, budget and grant preparation and ongoing monitoring and assessment of each program.

The Coordinator of the Youth Advocacy Program maintains the primary liaison role with referral sources in the community and supervises a staff of two caseworkers and one clerical. The Coordinator also maintains case evaluation responsibilities, assists in the planning of the program, and participates in community education efforts. The Coordinator may also carry responsibility for a small caseload.

The Youth Advocates provide assessment, intensive casework counseling and advocacy services, service coordination to juveniles and their families, monitoring and case termination.

The secretary provides clerical support, serves as receptionist for the program, maintains the program's record system, and assists in the preparation of statistical and special reports.

Professional supervisory level staff are required to have an MSW or related Master's degree; casework staff are required to have a BSW or related degree and appropriate experience.

7. Budget and funding. Figure 2, below, is a presentation of the Youth Advocacy Program budget for calendar year 1979.

FIGURE 2

INCOME	
Governor's Justice Commission	$52,449
United Way	1,000
Children and Youth	7,000
Catholic Social Services	6,045
TOTAL INCOME	$66,494
EXPENSES	
Salaries	
Coordinator	$12,857
Professional	20,419
Clerical	6,330
TOTAL SALARIES	$37,606
Benefits and taxes	
Social Security	$ 2,396
Workmen's Compensation	258
Unemployment Insurance	744
Medical Insurance	3,420
Retirement Benefits	4,911
Malpractice Insurance	93
Total benefits and taxes	$11,822
Staff Support	
Mileage	$ 1,285
Training	150
Educational supplies	150
TOTAL staff support	$ 1,586

Service/Plant Operations	
Rent, including utilities	$ 4,000
Maintenance, building	180
Telephone	2,000
Postage	375
Printing	400
Office supplies	480
Total Service/Plant Operations	$ 7,435
Other	
**Administrative Support	$ 6,945
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	$66,494

**Administrative support, valued at 10% of the operating budget is an estimate of the value of services provided by Catholic Social Services to the program and includes supervision of the program, bookkeeping services, auditing services, etc.

8. Program Operations

One of the identified problems that led to the program's development was the lack of referrals from police departments. One should not assume that the availability of a program designed for status offenders will mean automatic referrals from police departments, magistrates, and the courts. Because it was obvious that specific effort were needed to increase both the number and source of referrals, particularly from smaller, non urban police departments, these efforts will be obtained prior to a description of the service operations.

On the assumption that the low rate of referrals to community based social services from police, the courts, and magistrates was attributable to a lack of information and/or confidence in social service agencies, the Youth Advocacy Program attempted to increase referrals by a systematic outreach effort, continuing liaison activities, a formalized referral system.

A. Outreach -- The initial phase of the Youth Advocacy Program concentrated on establishing contact with police departments, magistrates and juvenile court personnel. Ancillary groups to these referral sources -- police associations, municipal authorities, school districts -- were also contacted. The purpose of the initial meetings were threefold: to discuss the services offered by the Youth Advocacy Program and other community social service programs, to explain the referral process, and to discuss the problem of status offenders in their communities. The Youth Advocacy staff involved in these initial meetings sought to build on some of the positive attitudes of a few of the police departments had established toward The Bridge staff in dealings with other component programs. Initial meetings found staff dealing with many of the negative feelings of the police to social services, their attitudes to the status offender (hard line, in many cases) and their concern that participation by families and juveniles in the program was voluntary. Most departments expressed an interest in the program and promised referrals.

B. Referral Process -- The initial meeting was also used to introduce a standard referral process revolving around a standard referral form (see Appendix B) that police, magistrates and the court could use in referring cases to the Youth Advocacy Program. This process would insure ongoing communication between the program and referral sources.

Police were asked to complete the referral form when a status offender who appeared

to need social services came to their attention. This form consists of an original and two carbon copies. Identifying information on the juvenile and his parents, and a brief description of the presenting problem is requested. The form is mailed to the Youth Advocacy Program. After initial contact is made with the family by a Youth Advocate, the first carbon copy is returned to the referral source to inform them of the contact and to give a brief idea of the treatment plan. In three months time, or at termination, the second carbon copy is returned and the status of the case is noted.

The referral form not only assures ongoing communication between the referral source and the program, but it also serves as an ongoing method of outreach to status offenders and their families as well. Discussions with referral sources revealed that often status offenders and their families are encouraged to contact the program, but fail to follow through. Appropriate completion of the referral form gives the staff the necessary identifying information to contact the family and encourage participation in the program.

C. Ongoing liaison activities -- The initial outreach contact was meant to be the first of many contacts with police departments. In order to keep the Youth Advocacy Program constantly visible to police departments, ongoing liaison activities were necessary. The program coordinator met at least quarterly with all departments. After a number of visits, it was ascertained that, for various reasons, a few departments either exhibited little understanding of the program operations, expressed vague interest in the program or outright refused to participate in the program. To continue active liaison activities with these departments would not have been a wise investment of time.

Liaison activities were continued with most departments. These liaison activities proved invaluable in clarifying roles and responsibilities the program workers could assume. In other cases, the contacts allowed the program to remain prominent and accessible to potential referral sources.

Often, liaison activities came about in response to a request by the referral source for assistance in dealing with a specific case. Attempts are made to give immediate response and support to the referral source in this situation.

In several cases, the liaison activities have been increased from quarterly meetings to weekly or bimonthly sessions at the request of the police departments themselves. The departments felt more frequent meetings would keep them up to date on the status of cases and would serve as a reminder to them of the program.

The Youth Advocacy Program is also in the process of organizing regular group meetings with police departments in the county. Such meetings could serve as a forum where community problems in dealing with status offenders could be aired, program supports given, and common experiences shared.

Before closing this section, it is essential to outline a few suggestions for dealing with police departments to encourage referrals:

* Know all pertinent legislation or regulations that govern the local police departments with regard to status offenders. This will assist in meeting police on a common ground of knowledge.
* Don't talk down to the police you deal with. Show understanding of their problems and concerns but address these at their level.
* Many police resent social workers and their reluctance to share information. Assure the referral source that you won't leave them hanging -- that to help the juvenile, it must be a cooperative effort. Above all, stress the fact that it is not social worker vs. the police, but that you are out for a common end.

* Recognize that there will be differences in how the police might like to see a case handled (punishment, hard line) vs. how your staff might like to see a case handled.

* Be aware of changes in the police districts you are dealing with. Staff turnover or reassignment could significantly affect inroads made by the program.

* Always keep communication as open as possible. Feedback to the referral source is essential to maintaining communication.

9. Direct Services

1. Intake. Intake consists of those activities used to make status offenders and their families aware of the program and to interest them in using available services.

a. Outreach. As previously discussed, funding limitations demand that referrals to the program only be accepted from police departments, courts, and magistrates. The bulk of the outreach efforts, therefore, is directed to the referral sources mentioned. Once referrals are received from appropriate sources, outreach contacts to the status offender and his/her family are made by a Youth Advocate to explain services and encourage participation.

b. Information. Information about the Youth Advocacy Program is disseminated to the community in several ways. Annual meetings with police associations are conducted by The Bridge Project Director to keep them informed of the status of the program. The Bridge maintains a speaker's bureau that will furnish a speaker to community groups upon request. Youth Advocacy Program staff serve on this bureau. A brochure of Catholic Social Services' programs, including the Youth Advocacy Program, is widely disseminated in the community (See Attachment B).

c. Case Screening. Status offenders from the age of 10 to 18 referred by police departments, courts, and magistrates are accepted for service consideration. The referrals, made primarily through the referral form, contain minimal information concerning the juvenile and his presenting problem. The program coordinator screens all referrals and based on the presented information, assigns the case to a Youth Advocate. The Advocate contacts the juvenile and/or his family to discuss the services available and to set up an appointment for the initial visit.

10. Assessment and planning process. The assessment and planning process are combined.

The assigned Youth Advocate assesses client need through one or more interviews with the juvenile and his/her family. In necessary, the juvenile's teacher or school counselor is contacted for additional information. If appropriate the worker may also contact the psychiatric consultant to Catholic Social Services, present appropriate information concerning the case, and seek advice on the most appropriate way to handle it. Based on all available information, one of two courses of action is taken.

If the primary presenting problem is one of severe drug or alcohol abuse, mental health, or child abuse, the case is referred to appropriate community services. Youth referred who have either runaway or are reported as chronic runaway problems are referred to the Runaway Youth Program of The Bridge. The worker will encourage the family to contact the agency, or with the family's approval, will set up the interview for them. If the family agrees to participate with the community service, the Youth Advocate will check to ensure that the initial contact is made and monitor

the progress of the case by periodic phone contacts. The worker also remains available to assist the community agency in their work with the status offender and his/her family. If the family refuses to contact the suggested community agency, but will accept services from the Youth Advocacy Program, the case will be kept open, with the primary goal being to encourage acceptance of service from the more appropriate community agency.

The remainder of the cases continue in service with the assigned Youth Advocate. Goals for the juvenile and his/her family are discussed and formalized. The worker seeks a verbal committment from both the juvenile and family to continue in service usually eight-ten sessions. This committment is necessary because the family of the juvenile often come into the initial appointment with the idea that the program will be an extension of the police and that treatment will be brief and punitive. The committment to a minimum number of sessions ensures that they will view service as an investment that will require their working on problems as a unit. It is understood that at the end of the contract agreement, the worker and the juvenile/family will review the progress made mutually and determine whether further involvement is necessary.

11. User services. Primary user services are intensive family and individual counseling, youth advocacy, and support service. Once assessment and goal planning is completed, the appropriate counseling modality is determined.

a. Individual counseling -- When individual counseling is indicated, the assigned youth advocate conducts the sessions. Initially the sessions are on a weekly basis. As the case develops and progress is made, sessions are held biweekly, and finally monthly. Sessions may be conducted at The Bridge office, the juvenile's home, the local pizza parlor, the school, a porch -- anywhere the youth is most comfortable to discuss his problems. Cases normally are terminated in 4 - 6 months. Often juveniles are reluctant to speak with counselors concerning their problems and needs. Counseling centers on attempting to develop communication with the juvenile to allow him to express his problems in relating to school, parents, and peers. Once a relationship is established and problem areas outlined, the juvenile is encouraged to develop his problem-solving capabilities, and to redefine his goals and values. Obviously, this approach works best when the youth is motivated to participate. When motivation is lacking other approaches such as behavior modification or supportive counseling may be used.

The worker also remains available to discuss interests and personal goals with the juvenile in informal settings, thus allowing the youth to develop a positive perspective. Workers also encourage the youth to expand their interests and potential for involvement in varied activities.

Attention is given to developing the therapeutic relationship in a positive, non-labelling manner. The youth is approached as an individual with problems that are manageable and able to be resolved. Responsibility for actions is placed with the youth but in such a manner as to reinforce his potential to make sound decisions regarding his behavior.

b. Family counseling -- Most status offenders' problems involve family problems as well. The behavior of the status offender may be a symptom of poor family relationship: Often, the disruptive behavior has caused strains on family roles. Therefore, family involvement in counseling is recommended in most situations.

Most families remain in counseling approximately six months following a weekly, then biweekly, finally monthly schedule. Family counseling is conducted by the assigned youth worker and most often the counseling is conducted at The Bridge office or in the family's home.

Family dynamics are assessed in both office and home visits. Intensive family counseling on assessed problem areas is undertaken. Supportive counseling to improve existing healthy relationships is included, along with working on communication skills, value clarification and goal setting. Priority always is on effecting positive changes in the family situation and avoiding further disruption of the family milieu that could lead to placement or detention.

c. Advocacy. Most status offenders and their families are in need of advocacy services. Basically, advocacy services are activities that ensure that the client receives services and rights that are their due, but which they cannot secure without assistance. The primary advocacy service revolves around ensuring the juvenile receives due process from the court and from the school. This requires that the worker know the law and how it applies in specific situations and can negotiate with appropriate parties. In some cases, advocacy may involve negotiating to have the juvenile returned to calss or ensuring that school suspension follow the rules of warning and hearing. Advocacy may involve attending juvenile court hearings or arranging for legal services. One "group" advocacy case resulted in securing a facility for group recreation for a group of aimless youth in a small community. Advocacy to the family may involve assisting the family in obtaining welfare services-food stamps and so on. In short, the worker will assist the juvenile and his family in any situation where a more knowledgable voice is needed to secure services.

d. Support Service -- Key to bolstering of positive change in the juvenile and his family situation are support services available in the community. Among the support services to the Youth Advocacy Program are several service components of The Bridge. Since description of these services were given on page four , brief descriptions will be given here:

*Life Skills Education component of The Bridge. This preventive group services component offers preventive, developmental and treatment services to improve the ability of high risk youth and their families to perform activities of daily independent living. Workshops in parenting and communication skills are provided.

*Community employment services . The Job Corps program is utilized to provide juveniles with vocational training, while the Youth Employment Service is utilized to assist juveniles in obtaining employment.

*YMCA tutoring. This community service is utilized in situations where the juvenile is experiencing problems in school.

*Runaway Youth Program of The Bridge. This important adjunct to the Youth Advocacy Program offers crisis intervention services to runaways, stresses reunification of families, and provides intensive follow up and family counseling.

*Big Brother/Big Sister Program of The Bridge. This service provides juveniles with an opportunity to further growth and development through a relationship with a positive adult figure.

Case monitoring and evaluation. Case monitoring is the responsibility of the assigned Youth Advocate. Monitoring of progress toward meeting goals is a process that is part of the ongoing service contact. Progress is formally reviewed at the end of the agreed upon ten sessions. If continued services are indicated, goals are restated and services continued. The assigned worker also monitors progress of the client in support services through periodic telephone contacts with the support program staff.

Cases are evaluated periodically by the program coordinator. Weekly staffings on problem cases are held to solicit group ideas and strategies.

Case termination and follow-up. As the worker sees significant progress in meeting program goals, he begins the process of termination. This process involves a review of the progress made in the case, future goals, and areas where weaknesses are noted. Responsibility for termination rests with the assigend worker.

Follow up to case termination is an informal process. Periodic telephone calls are made to the juvenile family to ensure that no outstanding problems are surfacing.

12. Program Evaluation

Briefly stated, there were two main goals of the Youth Advocacy Program that are subject to measure:

1. to provide a specialized service package to status offenders and their families.

2. to increase the number of referrals from appropriate sources, and the number of referral sources, particularly rural and suburban police departments.

In the nineteen months of program operations 298 status offenders were servied by the Youth Advocacy Program. The number served by problem are as follows:

	1978*	1979*
Truancy/School Adjustment	13	16
Runaways	28	17
Incorrigibility	116	99
Brief Service	1	8
TOTAL SERVED	158	140

* Eleven month data

The initial goal to provide specialized services to status offenders has obviously been met.

Prior to the initiation fo the program, The Bridge received, on the average, three referrals per month from seven different referral sources. The average monthly referrals have increased by 400% and the referral sources have tripled, as shown by the following. Also 60% of cases referred are from rural/suburban area.

	1977	1978*	1979*
Average Monthly Referrals	3	14	13
Referral Sources	7	29	26

*Eleven month data

While no data exists regarding the effectiveness of the program in regard to reducing recidividsm, influencing the attitudes of police to social service agencies, or influencing attitudes of juveniles toward adjusting disruptive behavior, interviews with police indicate that their impression is that the majority of the juvenile status offenders referred to the program do not come to their attention again. Hopefully, the Youth Advocacy Program will be establishing formal evaluation procedures some time in 1980.

While not meant to be an evaluation document, a questionnaire was administered to approximately eighteen participating police departments to elicit comments on the Youth Advocacy Program, use of the referral form, and estimated number of referrals for the year (See Attachment C). The results of the questionnaire indicate that about 85% of those departments responding rated the quality and effectiveness of the Youth Advocacy Program as excellent. When asked how services could be improved, several police departments noted that the voluntary nature of the program could reslut in client's lack of motivation. Many suggested that families should be forced to participate in the program. Other police departments noted that status offenders were not a priority in their departments, particularly since funds for juvenile officers were cut. Yet other police departments rated the Youth Advocacy Program as the "only worthwhile program in the county" and saw it as being an "excellent medium between the court and the police."

It is obvious that the program has been successful in substantially increasing the number of referrals to the Youth Advocacy Program and in increasing the number of referral sources. The program has aslo met its goal to deliver services to the status offender and his family. Whether or not intervention has been successful in deterring further disruptive behavior has not been proven, however an integral segment of of program objectives for 1980 is to design and administer a research instrument to determine recidivism rates and overall effectiveness of the program.

Appendix

A recent Pennsylvania Act No. 1977-41 amending Juvenile Act 333 played an indispensable role in the development of the Youth Advocacy Program.

This Act addresses an array of critical issues regarding the treatment of dependant and delinquent children within the Juvenile Justice system. In total this amendment exhibits progressive and needed changes in the workings of the Juvenile Justice system in Pennsylvania, however due to the scope and intent of this paper the focus will be limited to how this amendment pertains to the Youth Advocacy Program.

The essential area with respect to the Youth Advocacy Program addresses the removal of the status offender (the ungovernable "habitually disobediant", runaway and the chronically truant child) from the delinquent category and places that child as dependant. The significance of this section which is in compliance with the Federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974, seperates the non-criminal (status offender) child from those who have committed criminal offenses and to divert those who commit status offenses away from the juvenile justice system into community based alternatives.

If more detailed information is desired (copies of Federal/State laws, etc.) it is advised that a letter be sent to respective legislators requesting needed literature.

Referral Form

"THE BRIDGE"
YOUTH ADVOCACY PROGRAM

19 N. River Street, Wilkes-Barre, Pa.
(717) 824-3533
(717) 455-6742

The main objectives of this form are to assist in continuing communication between the referral source and the Youth Advocacy Program and to insure contact with the family.

It is **not** the only means of making a referral. Many situations are of a more immediate nature and require a telephone contact so that a meeting with the family and/or juvenile can be made without delay. In these instances, we request that the form be completed and sent to us after the telephone referral.

NAME OF JUVENILE _____ AGE: _____

NAME OF PARENTS _____ DATE: _____

ADDRESS _____

_____

_____

TELEPHONE _____

Check if:	YES	NO
Parents accept referral	☐	☐
Other Agency involved	☐	☐

PROBLEM AREA: *(check more than one if needed)*

1. Truant _____ 2. Runaway _____ 3. Ungovernability _____ 4. Underage drinking _____ 5. Other _____

COMMENTS:

REFERRED BY/MAILING ADDRESS _____

The Bridge will advise about the following information:

CONFIRMATION OF INITIAL CONTACT:

UPDATE/TERMINATION:

THE BRIDGE

YOUTH SERVICES CENTER

[redacted]
Telephone 824 5766

What is The Bridge?

An informal, comfortable place for youth to come to develop their ideas resolve their concerns and secure comprehensive services for individual difficulties. Many goals have been achieved through an innovative blending of our experienced staff, dedicated volunteers, other agencies, and varied community groups. The Bridge has helped youth become better acquainted with existing programs and activities as well as assisting in the development of useful alternatives for youth in the community. The center also offers a confidential beginning point for those young people and families experiencing personal problems.

What Services Are Available?

- Community-wide Youth Development and Prevention Services
- Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America Program
- Rap Groups and Parent Discussion Groups
- Neighborhood Outreach Workers
- Individual, Group, and Family Counseling
- Special Services to Runaways and Their Families (available 24 hours daily)
- Legal Services (in cooperation with Legal Services Assoc.)
- Job Corps Training (in cooperation with the Job Corps Recruiter)
- Life Skills Education Program
- Youth Advocacy Program (824-3533/455-6742)

When Can I Call or Walk In?

Monday, Wednesday, Thursday
9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Tuesday and Friday
9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Administered by CATHOLIC SOCIAL SERVICES Member Agency — UNITED WAY OF WYOMING VALLEY

Note: Below is a questionaire that was administered to sixteen referral sources during July of 1979 in an effort to determine the causative factors for a slowdown in the referral flow.

THE BRIDGE YOUTH SERVICE CENTER
15 South Franklin Street
Third Floor
Wilkes-Barre, Pa.
824-5766

QUESTIONAIRE

1. Do you feel that the referral form is a useful mechanism in aiding communication between the Police and Youth Advocacy Program?

Not Useful	1	Frequently useful	5
Sometimes Useful		Always useful	9

2. When counseling is suggested to families at point of police contact, how often is the referral form used?

Never		Frequently	3
Sometimes		Always	12

3. Does the procedure of implementing the referral form ever present a problem in its use

Yes 2 No 13

If yes, how? If client see's the form, there may be concern that it means a police record--sometime difficult to use because of time.

4. How do you rate the quality and effectiveness of The Bridge, Youth Advocacy Program?

Excellant	11	Poor	
Good	4	Fair	

5. Any suggestions, criticisms on how our services could be improved.

Services should be mandatory--more clout needed-suggestion that a forum be organized between kids and police.

6. The basic thrust of Youth Advocacy Program is diversion of serious status offenders at point of police contact into alternative service (e.g. counseling social services etc.). At what point do you typically refer status offenders to The Bridge.

Initial contact 3

When initial warning does not change behavior 3

When he/she present chronic/repeating problems 3

only at parents request 1

Other 5 varies according to situation

7. Consideration is being given to beginning periodic meetings with law enforcement personnel. Issues will be pertinent to police officers and their needs in respect to juveniles. Do you view the creation of these meetings as being advisable?

Yes 16 No _____

8. Would you be willing to send a representative to these meetings which would probably be held on a quarterly basis throughout the year?

Yes 15 No 1 small force and coverage could be a problem.

9. During 1978 we requested a projection regarding the approximate number of referrals your department would make to the program for 1979. Your department response was _____ and to date we have recieved _____. If there is a discrepancy, please comment on the reason.

juvenile problems diminished, parents not looking to police for advice-- Since status offenders are no longer considered delinquent they are less of a priority--Most juveniles seen commit criminal offenses.

10. We realize that it is sometimes difficult to predict how many referrals of status offenders will be made in a given period. However, because of funding procedures and pressures from other referral sources it is important that we have as accurate a picture as possible so that we can make a realistic appraisal of the need to continue our program as it presently exists. Please estimate the number of referrals that you would expect to make between now and the end of August 1979

Projected Number N/A

Including the above number how many referrals do you anticipate between now and January 1,1980. N/A

*Respondent was recently named acting Chief and was not familiar with the program, therefore was unable to answer first six questions.